

Detective Katherine Czerny's star is on the rise. She's a key figure in the Medina Cartel scandal, the youngest woman to ever make lieutenant in the LAPD, and, most importantly, a close, personal friend and sometimes-silly of The Orphan. Czerny is personable, but intense, a woman carrying the weight of the city's security-industrial complex on her well-toned shoulders. "Less talk, more action" is generally her mantra, and it took us months to pin her down. But we finally convinced her to spare 45 minutes or so to bring us up to speed. I met Czerny at a little coffee shop on Wilshire, just a stone's throw from the former site of Mason Tower. Needless to say, it didn't take long for our conversation to turn to the naked man whose actions changed the Miracle Mile skyline forever: Fury of Solace.

"The scariest thing about Fury of Solace is the cult of personality building up around the guy," Czerny said. "As long as people insist on treating him like some kind of mythic boogymann, that's going to be a self-fulfilling prophecy." And Czerny thinks that Fury of Solace himself is buying into the hype. "Look, even Fury of Solace is trying to make his war with Mason out to be some overblown, Manichean struggle when in the real world, people just aren't that arch. Strip everything away, Fury of Solace is just a sad little man with a bone to pick with the 1%." A sad little man with above-average intellect and military training, which, in this case, is a very dangerous combination.

"For people like Solace, the violent lifestyle becomes like an addiction," Czerny continued. "What unites these wackos is a common sense of self-importance, a belief that the problems of the world can't be solved without their personal involvement. It's practically religious."

Solace has been silent for almost a year. Could that violent lifestyle Czerny mentioned have finally done him in? "We know he's still out there, because every now and then he pokes his head up on Twitter." Costumed zealots using social media to cultivate supporters of their cause is becoming a disturbing trend. I wondered aloud why the police would allow terrorists like Solace a venue to spread their poisonous vitriol. "We could shut him

down, sure," Czerny said, matter-of-factly. "But the guy's got that supervillain complex big-time, bragging about his schemes before they happen. I'll lay down even money that's how we catch him. He can keep his gun if he's only gonna use it to shoot himself in the foot."

And Czerny is convinced it's only a matter of time before the authorities catch up to him. "There are only so many places you can hide," Czerny said. "It's simply an issue of resources. Where does he get his weapons? Where does he sleep? He's got people who are keeping him safe, and eventually we're going to break through his protection network." But finding an in to that network has proven exceedingly difficult for not just Det. Czerny, but for the entirety of the Los Angeles police department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Homeland Security. And if the best and brightest America's law enforcement has to offer can't catch Fury of Solace, where do we turn to next? Surely Solace's arch-enemy can keep him in line.

"See, now you're doing it," Czerny said, frustration creeping into her voice. "Personally, I think it's reductive to define terrorists like Fury of Solace in relation to heroes like Laurel. To him and to her, I know Laurel, she's not bigger than life. She's perfectly life-sized." Then she looked at me pointedly and added: "So stop deifying her. She hates that."

And Czerny says that heavy hitters like Solace aren't even in the Orphan's wheelhouse: her encounter with him during the Mason Tower tragedy was the exception that proves the rule. "Hunting specific targets like Solace isn't even really Laurel's m.o. I mean, don't get me wrong, she's my friend, and she does a lot of good for this city with her charities and her blog, but as far as crime-fighting goes, she's mostly out there stopping nuggings and crimes of passion. And don't you dare quote me out of context here, I feel good knowing she's out there cleaning up the C-listers. Fries up the boys and girls in blue to focus on the big guns."

I felt obliged to point out that her

characterization of Laurel seemed odd, given how closely the two worked on the Medina Cartel investigation. "With a case like that when corruption runs so deep in the department, an outsider like Laurel was the only person I could really trust," Czerny explained. "Honestly, she brought that case to me, so I was definitely her sidekick on that one, not the other way around." As has been widely reported, their investigation revealed that officers all the way up the chain of command (up to and including City Councilman Matthew Stanis) had been on the payroll of the Medina Cartel, a Mexican drug cartel that, until this treachery was revealed, had cornered the market on the L.A. drug trade.

Rooting out corruption in the LAPD certainly put the public firmly in Czerny's corner, and it's this high profile case that earned her a promotion to lieutenant, making her the youngest woman to hold that rank in this city's history. But after getting almost two dozen of her fellow rank-and-file officers thrown in prison, hasn't she seen blowback from within the department? "I think you're thinking of the old LAPD, back when my dad was on the force," she told me. "These days, cops can't throw each

other under a bus fast enough." And that, as far as Czerny is concerned, is a good thing: It speaks to accountability.

Most major U.S. cities have forged alliances with the superheroes in their midst, and until now, Los Angeles has been a notable holdout. But our own Police Commissioner Harlan Stone is backing a proposal that, if passed, promises to change the game completely: Stone wants to officially incorporate superheroes into the LAPD. Stone took a lot of flak after a recent appearance on "Crisis," where he made some statements which appeared to be at the Orphan's expense. Stone clarified after the fact: "Ms. Warren's service to this city has been incalculable. Anyone who fights to keep the force on the up-and-up is okay in my book. It's this culture of vigilantism that we cannot and will not tolerate. But give them a badge and the training that comes with it, make them accountable for their actions... that's when they'll really start making a difference."

And as far as Czerny is concerned, bringing superheroes into the fold is more than just a good idea: With super-on-human aggression on the rise, it's practically an inevitability. But isn't

Czerny worried that super-powered cops will render ordinary people like her obsolete? "First of all, there's nothing ordinary about me," Czerny said with a grin. "More importantly, being a cop's not about how many cars you can bench press. It's about this," she said, gesturing to her head. "You find a recruit with brains and brawn, you damn well better send him my way. That's exactly the kind of cop this city needs."

But apparently not everyone in the department is on the same page: L.A.'s police Chief James Barton has been a vocal opponent of Stone's initiative, and this is not the first time the two have butted heads. "There's been some push and pull since the chief got elected under his own steam, yeah. Nothing that won't work itself out in the wash. And that's all I'm gonna say about that." When I reminded her that, regarding this issue, she was quoted in another source as saying that Stone and Barton were engaged in a "pissing match," Czerny simply smirked and said: "There's a reason I don't do interviews."

So, if super-cops are L.A.'s future, does that mean Czerny thinks the city's not big enough for superhuman vigilantes? "No matter how awesome and well-intentioned Laurel is, she's just one woman. Don't fall into the trap that so many seem to, assuming when the... hits the fan, the Orphan will be there to save you. People turn to superheroes because they don't trust the police. And after the Medina scandal, who can blame them? But superheroes are just a band-aid. If there's something wrong the system, you don't settle for a work-around, you fix the system. And kicking Stanis and the rest of his Medina cronies out is just the first step. Bringing superheroes into the fold so we can work hand-in-hand with them openly may be the next." •

